

Dear Friends,

Now that the 2003 school year is under way, I would like to talk with you about education. As your state representative, one of my highest priorities is ensuring that every child has access to the best education possible. As a parent and elementary teacher for the last 18 years in the Bethel School District, I know firsthand how a solid education helps pave the way for every child's life. Education means opportunity.

During my time in the Legislature, we have worked to help schools focus on strengthening basic academics. We have encouraged parents to become even more involved in their children's education. We have put more emphasis on the roles of teachers and local school boards. And this year, in the face of massive budget deficits, we have continued to put education first, providing salary increases for teachers in their first seven years, boosting per-student funding for class-size reduction, and embarking on an aggressive school construction program.

This newsletter outlines some of the key education legislation considered by the Legislature earlier this year during the 2003 session. If you have questions or comments, please let me know. I always appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,



State Representative

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2003
EDUCATION REPORT

Kindergarten - 12

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More funding for key education needs

Teachers in Washington are paid on a salary schedule set by the state. Education organizations have said that often the wages for beginning teachers have been too low to attract people to the teaching profession, and that many young teachers are leaving the classroom early in their careers in favor of jobs that pay better.

To help balance the state's operating budget (that had a \$2.7 billion deficit), the governor suggested suspending pay raises for teachers authorized by Initiative 732 – raises above and beyond the regular "step" increases available to teachers. However, the budget we adopted took the education community's concerns into account and provided money to boost salaries for beginning teachers.

• Teacher salary increases

Under the new budget, salaries are increased for teachers with seven or fewer years' experience. By the end of next year, the average annual salary for a teacher in Washington will be nearly \$46,000 – and starting teachers will make a minimum of \$30,000 per year, plus benefits.

• Class size reductions

The budget includes \$30 million more for class-size reductions than the governor requested. The per-pupil grant will equal \$254 per student, compared to the \$212 proposed by Gov. Locke.

• Assisting low-performance schools

Funding was provided to allow an additional 30 low-performing schools to receive "focused assistance." Under this program, low-performing schools are assigned a facilitator to work with a school improvement team consisting of district and school staff, parents, and community members to develop and implement a school improvement plan.

• Web-based educational services

Up to \$2 million was allocated for the establishment of a Digital Learning Commons – a web-based portal where students, parents and teachers will have access to digital resources, learning tools and online classes.

• Mentoring scholars

The Legislature provided \$1 million to the Washington State Achievers Scholarship Program. The funds will be used to support recruiting, training and matching community volunteer mentors with high school students selected as achievers scholars.

Providing \$ for school construction needs

As a member of the House Capital Budget Committee, I worked to secure more than \$405 million in the capital construction budget for K-12 school construction, including \$30.4 million for new school buildings in the Bethel School District. Thanks to this support, construction will begin on 42 school facilities across the state in 29 school districts. For the Bethel School District, I helped to allocate state funding for construction of the new **Kapowsin Elementary School**, the new **Cougar Mountain Junior High School** and a new high school in Graham.

Through a \$20 million project appropriated in the state transportation budget to upgrade Meridian Street (Highway 161), we saved the Bethel School District an additional \$1.2 million. That's the amount the Department of Transportation would have charged for upgrading the Eustus Road intersection to connect to the new Graham high school. Now, the school district can use that money for school construction.

Additionally, new artificial turf will be installed at the **Art Crate Stadium Field** as the result of \$500,000 I helped to appropriate from the capital construction budget. The new turf will allow for expanded activities year round, including soccer.



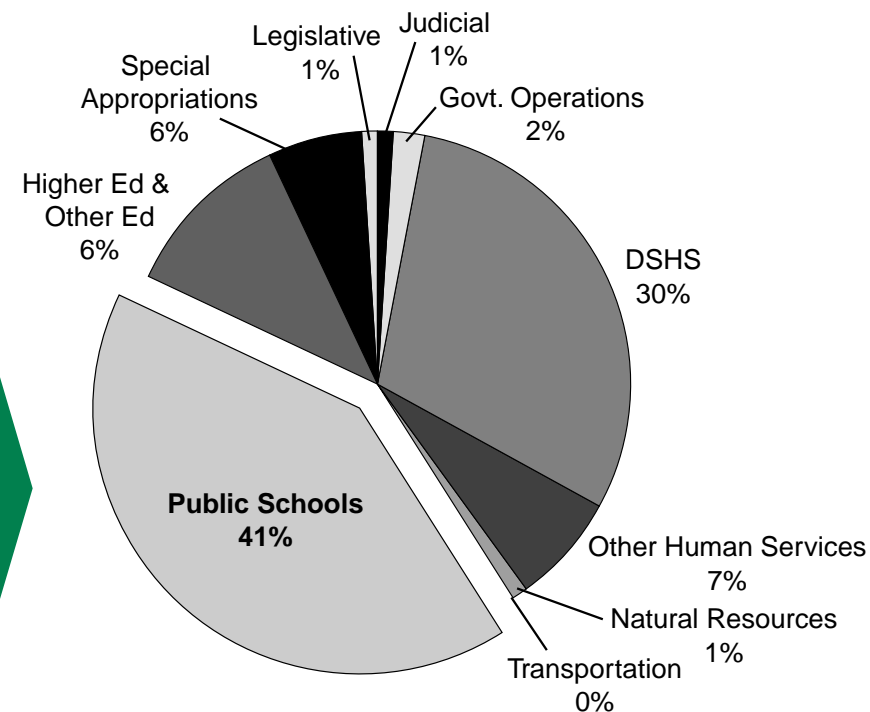
Promoting science, wildlife and environmental education

Point Defiance Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, the Washington Audubon Society and other private entities have outreach programs available to schools. This year, the Legislature passed a measure intended to help leverage private fund raising and volunteer resources in the public schools, and promote how to use these resources most effectively. The bill establishes the Natural Science, Wildlife and Environmental Education Partnership Program. This partnership will promote educational programs aligned with the state's academic learning requirements, and will include instruction about renewable resources, the responsible use of resources and conservation.



2003-05 Operating Budget General Fund-State and Related State Accounts

Funding for K-12 education makes up the largest single portion of the state's operating budget.



Rep. Roger Bush hosted 9th grade students from Cedarcrest Junior High School during a tour of the state capitol.